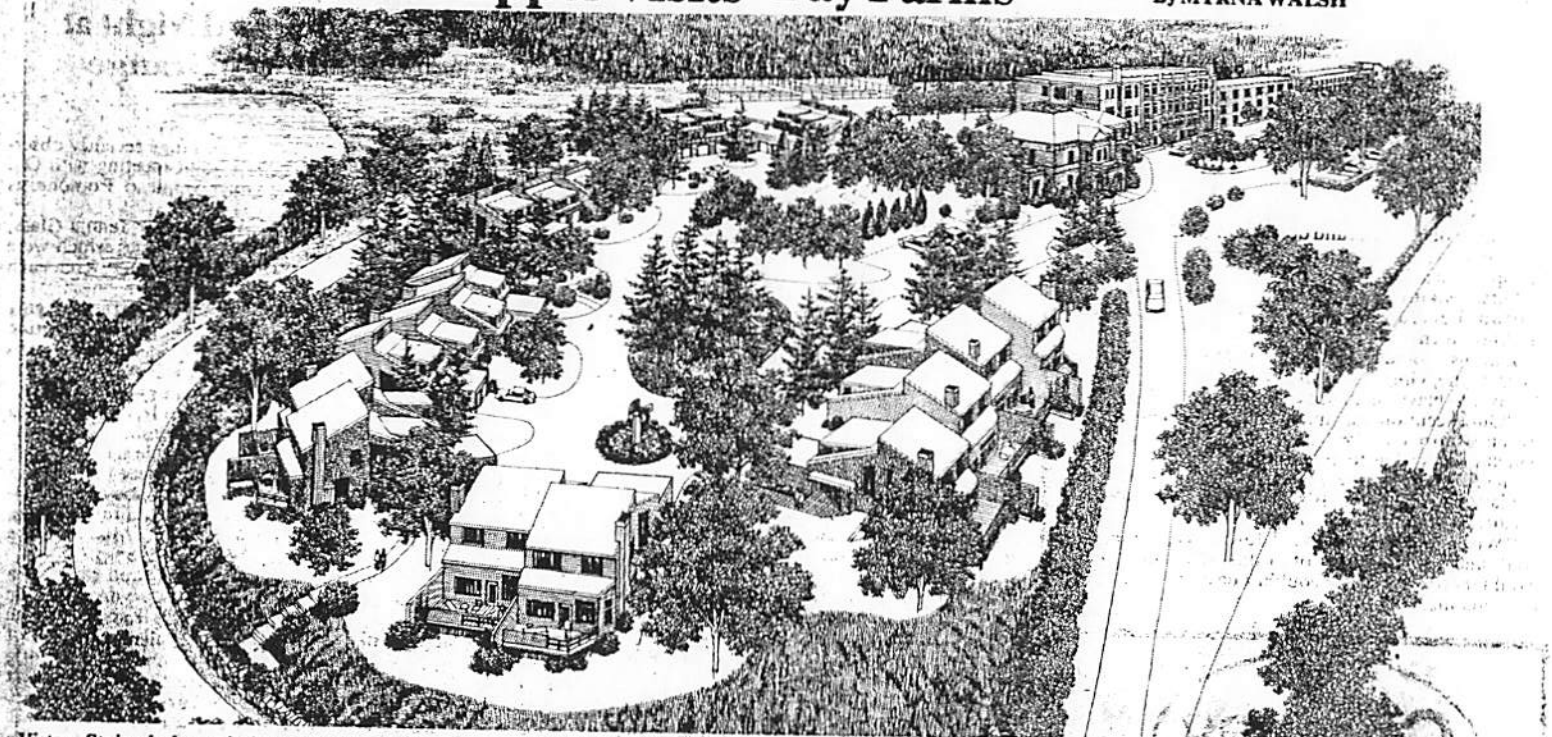
The Clipper Visits Bay Farms

By MYRNA WALSH



Vistas. Stained glass windows. Grassy knolls cupping a sandy bottom swimming pond. A million dollars worth of mature shrubs and trees -- some so large a man can barely reach half way around. A great brick and mortar building crowning the hill like an abandoned Brideshead. The last of its kind. The largest of its kind.

These 110 acres of prime land, formerly part of the Society of the Divine Word's Miramar retreat, are now Bay Farms. Approved for 170 units, it will be the largest condominium and single-family development on the South Shore.

Duxbury resident Lee Kennedy and his partner Jay Schlaijker, a real estate financial consultant, are principals of the Bay Farm Property Trust, which bought the property from the Society after complex negotiations that included approval from the Pope. Less than half of the 87 acres in Duxbury will hold housing. The remainder of the Duxbury side and all of the 23 acres in Kingston will remain in its natural condition.

The property contains the large brick school building, and gymnasium (which are actually 3 linked buildings), a chapel with intricate stained glass windows, and priests' quarters. In addition to the trees and shrubs lovingly planted for 2 centuries by the various owners, the property includes a 6-acre pond and 3.5 acre swimming pond. The smaller will be drained and the sandy bottom cleaned. The stone lighthouse will continue to grace the little island, a landmark familar to the hundreds of Duxbury children who learned to swim in the pond.

Dan Orwig, lanscape architect for the $33 million project, said the grotto will also be cleaned. But it will be temporarily sealed in respect to its religious significance.

3 Phases

Kennedy expects the project will be completed in 3 [illegible]

Would you like a private terrace, balcony, bay window with seat? Can you imagine yourself discoursing in your living room with sunken conversation area, relaxing in your private sauna, or sliding down the bannister of the spiral stairway?

Without major advertising, Kennedy has already met his goal of selling half the units in the first stage. Of the 20 units for which he already has a deposit, about a third will go to Duxbury residents.

Describing the kind of people attracted to Bay Farms, Kennedy said, "It's as if you went to Central Casting and asked for nice, substantial people. They have the ability to be quiet about who they are. We have a complete mix -- from retired couples to young singles. So far, none of them has children living with them." They come from Weston and Wellesley seeking elegance in a country setting. And from the Cape for a water view closer to Boston. They don't want to mow an acre of grass surrounding a 4-bedroom, Colonial box. They want space without worry.

Kennedy expects the residents will live at Bay Farms nearly year round and be active in the town. He will not sell to investors, although the units will be a good investments.

Kennedy felt that the property sells itself. "We have 110 acres and we are using barely 40. That's important to me as a resident of Duxbury and as an aesthetic person. Bay Farms is physically exciting. Attractive but low key. We give people a lot of things they couldn't afford to do in their own homes, like 24-hour, on-site security, fire and burglar alarms. They can walk on their own reservation. This is a classical example of how the Planned Unit Development (the zoning classification) works. I was competing against some big developers who wanted to take it and fill it in with boxes. That would have been disastrous."

Sales are handled on the site by Bay Farms Proper-

China, the fathers came to rest at the jewel by the sea.

However, the retreat activities also waned while the cost of maintenance and utilities soared. The Society leased the main building to schools in an effort to save the structure while continuing its educational tradition. Massasoit Community College, Fisher Junior College, Head Start and the Kennedy Center for Handicapped Children filled the buildings, if only temporarily, with the sounds of learning. But the sale was inevitable.

The Society retained 32 acres as a retreat on the portion between Park and Loring streets. The name Miramar will be associated only with the religious order. It fell to Kennedy and Schlaikjer to revive the historical name.

Schlaikjer started the talks with the Society and then with Kennedy arranged for the services of Dyer/Brown & Associates (architects); Daniel Orwig (landscape architect); and Donald Connors (attorney). "We put together the team before we had the permits or the money. We spent about half a million dollars out-of-pocket money." Kennedy praised the appeals, planning and various other town boards for being "enthusiastic and cooperative. They went out of their way to act timely on our submissions." After he worked up his plans and received the necessary permits, Kennedy approached lending institutions. Merchco (Merchants Cooperative Bank) lent the money to buy the property and Bay Bank-Norfolk is underwriting the construction package.

Kennedy, the Duxbury architect, developer and builder, scion of Maginnis & Walsh & Kennedy, an architectural firm in Boston, is well known in the Hub for the buildings he has renovated. Duxbury commuters probably pass one of his buildings every day. Among his work is the former Boston Safe Deposit Building at 100 Franklin St., Fidelity Management's

The first stage calls for 41 condominiums in the renovated school house and chapel: 6 in the priests' house (the mahogany bannister and panel will be preserved); 3 in the chapel; 15 in the school buildings; 11 in the administrative building; and 6 in the gym where a 2-story addition will be constructed. Many of the units will have balconies and those on the first floor of the school building will have recessed entryways, like those found along Newbury St. These units should be ready for occupancy by early fall.

This summer construction will begin on Phase 2. The 22 townhouses planned for the east side will have from 1500 to 1700 squre feet. Twelve single family homes, about 2,000 square feet each will also be built.

Finally in the last phase, due to be started in the summer of 1983, 36 multifamily units in 3 clusters 12-unit buildings, 11 single family homes and 38 townhouses will be constructed on the west side. The 3 phases total 160 units. Kennedy has permission to build 170; he hasn't announced plans for the additional 10 units.

Kennedy emphasized that the single family units, although clustered, will still have close to an acre for each house. The price of these homes will depend on the number of bedrooms and other amenities their owners choose.

Prices for the condominiums range from $90,000 to $225,000. Membership in the owners' association includes use of the jogging path, basketball and paddle ball courts, 6 tennis courts, indoor running path and exercise rooms. Many of the units come with covered garage space and locked storage rooms. Bay Farms will also have its own 24-hour security patrol.

Reading the descriptions of the units is like skimming through a Wish Book. How about a living room with sitting area, wet bar and fireplace. Maybe a master bedroom, dressing room and bathroom.

ties. A 10% deposit is required. Kennedy has 2 banks ready to offer mortgages at whatever the prevailing rate is in August or September, when papers are passed. Both Kennedy and Orwig said that many of the residents will buy their condominiums outright with profits from the sale of their homes.

For Kennedy, it is not just the chance to preserve a large area of natural beauty that makes Bay Farms so appealing. He has the opportunity to renovate buildings that had once been cherished. He said "the renovation process is so great because the perspective of the building remains, enhanced by the blood of life." He will preserve the painted ceilings and stately windows in the chapel, the polished woods in the priests' residence. History can't be manufactured; it carries its own patina.

Its History

And it is this ambiance, as much as its size and beauty, that makes the property special. It has been home to the wealthy, devout and powerful. When Thomas Loring, a financier and ship builder, bought the lands in 1702, he established the name "The Bay Farm." For generations, the Lorings entertained with an elegance and hospitality that regularly drew friends from Boston.

The property passed to John Parks, who purchased the part of The Bay Farm west of Park St. His mansion, built in 1876, became the rectory when Cardinal O'Connell bought the property for a summer residence. It was renamed Miramar, "Sea View."

The tract passed to the Society of the Divine Word which built 2 large school buildings for 80 boys in preseminary training. In the early 1950's, the Society added the last of the brick buildings. However, within a few years the number of boys enrolled had declined. Miramar then became a retreat for missionaries between assignments. From all over the world, including

Building. He reconstructed the Girls Town building so that the new owner, Hub Mail Advertising, could move in without losing production time. Strollers along the waterfront can see his work at Lewis and Union wharves.

Condos, Ships and Clinics

He took a burned-out Knights of Columbus hall and bowling alley in Charlestown and turned the blackened building into modern condominiums. Many of the luxury condos in Back Bay and Beacon Hill have authentic facades because of Kennedy's company restoring them.

Nearly every data or computer facility in New England has a "Floating Floor" a system that hides the heavy computer cables yet provides easy access to them. Kennedy has exclusive distributor rights in New England to these floors which he helped design. He is also one of the area's few habitability contractors. That means turning the bare, grey spaces inside ships into comfortable living quarters. The U.S.S. Edson, berthed in East Boston, has interiors by Kennedy. One of his companies also plans and constructs microwave antennae systems and telecommunications conference rooms for radio and television stations.

One of his more interesting projects was the conversion of the building that formerly held Whimsies and Mama Leone's into a specialized medical center. Owned by Liberty Mutual and sitting astride the Mass Pike, the building contains rehabilitation and therapy rooms where couples used to disco. He also designed small operating rooms for restorative surgery.

Kennedy, who lives on Washington St., with his children: Lee Michael, 17, Shaila, 16, and Gene, 15, balances an intensely busy career with the responsibilities of a single parent. "I'm home just about every

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Lee Kennedy

night and I try to stay in constant contact. Even calling from the phone I have in my car."

He said his job has "a certain element of risk. It keeps the loins tingling. I make decisions 24 hours a day that are utterly monumental." He later said, "In the past few years the economy is so horrendous, I've become a real business zombie. You have to be so diligent. One false move and it all falls apart. Sometimes my enjoyment is diminished by the attention to details." He credited his partner Schlaikjer with being able to sit down and work out the details. "I rely so heavily on Jay. Without him I wouldn't get involved."

A flamboyant dresser (he was wearing a flannel shirt, jeans, pointy toed suede boots and a belt studded with medalions of silver), he insists he is a private man. He also believes he is "very open and sociable, but people are apprehensive about approaching me. They equate success with being a big guy. I don't need that kind of adulation." A former Marine in Korea, he has driven a truck and worked as a scallywag on the docks before studying architecture. He said he'd "hate like hell" to lose his wealth but that he'd survive. "I've been there before."

Behind that white picket fence on Washington St. lives a man who owns 3 homes, who designed sets for a production of "West Side Story" on Long Island, and who recently found himself in ravaged Beirut, Lebanon, sitting across from the minister of finance for the PLO. The Arab wanted to give Kennedy $50 million to invest in the U.S. Kennedy said no, thank you. He extricated himself from the meeting, left the body guards and their machine guns, and traveled through the shell fire on his way to the airport. Suddenly he asked his driver to stop. As the old Mercedes stopped near a pile of rubble, Kennedy jumped out and salvaged several beer cans -- souvenirs for his sons' collection.

Way behind that picket fence, tucked into a back corner of his studio, is a sculpture Kennedy did of himself. It's a view of himself few people see.